

## Urban Systems: Encounters, Explorations + Experiences in Enigmatic Asia



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### Instructor:

Dr. Brian R. Sinclair, PhD DrHC FRAIC AIA (Intl)

### Preamble

#### **THEORY:**

*Analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another.  
Abstract thought. Speculation.*

*The general or abstract principles of a body of fact, a science or an art.  
Belief, policy or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action.*

*An ideal or hypothetical set of facts, principles or circumstances.*

*A plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offered to explain phenomena.*

*A hypothesis assumed for the sake of argument or investigation.*

*An unproven assumption.*

*A body of theorems presenting a precise systematic view of a subject.*

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10<sup>th</sup> Edition)*

*"Cities are made of scenes. Those scenes have a syntax."*

*Urban Code, Mikoleit & Purckhauer (2011)*

Cities are complex phenomena that present remarkable opportunities, and daunting challenges, for an increasing percentage of our planet's population. Our world is now more urban than rural, a fact that warrants the attention of Environmental Designers and calls for sound and effective decision making in order to heighten our quality of life. Cities prove rich in amenity, diversity, composition and character. They concurrently pose unique obstacles concerning infrastructure, order, management and harmony.

The urban systems course is intended to present an overview to theories, principles and practices in both an historical and contemporary sense. Being closely connected to and interwoven with the Tokyo studio, the course aims to support and reinforce encounters, explorations and experiences in Tokyo. Structurally the course includes lectures, video-taped talks, office visits, project tours and field studies which will illustrate and reinforce the interplay of theories and practices. Several assignments, coordinated with studio, will examine, delineate and demonstrate urban design theory in play in the city.

The Asia study abroad initiative brings together Environmental Design students in a rich interdisciplinary-focused milieu. Urban Design, residing at the nexus of Architecture and Planning, affords an extraordinary vehicle through which to investigate and understand the city. Through its dynamic and three-dimensional quality, urban design approaches vital questions concerning how we inhabit and utilize the spaces and places of urban settlement. It addresses the significant realm between buildings and considers how landscapes, built and natural, operate and contribute to the mix. The course bridges between the specific and the general – accepting that Environmental Designers need to focus on the competent execution of the particular while respecting broader systems. Consideration of scale and scope is essential (e.g., the project), while simultaneously responding the larger ethos (e.g., the neighborhood, the district, etc.). Subscription to holism and the pursuit of synergies are paramount.

## Systems + Specifics

### SYSTEM:

*A regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.  
An organized set of doctrines, ideas or principles intended to explain the arrangement or working of a systematic whole.  
Organized or established procedure.  
Harmonious arrangement or pattern.*

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th Edition)*

*"The Japanese society approaches much of life with a similar respect for space and a critical eye to efficiency. Take clothing, for example: kimonos are designed to be folded then stored flatly, tightly, and efficiently. The bento box for food is another example where the focus is on space: attention to delivery, designed presentation, concern for aesthetics, and no waste. Cemeteries are another example of high efficiency, effective use of room, and the appreciation for scale, mass, surface, and space. As regards design and space, Japanese culture so often places tremendous value on beautiful functionality, on quality, on keeping, on maintaining, on preserving, on innovating, and on appreciating."  
Sinclair, 2015, *Cybernetics + Systems**

The Tokyo Urban Systems course in Fall 2018 considers most notably the rich, complex and multifarious urban realm this remarkable city. Tokyo is an amazing city that needs to be understood on its own as well as in comparison to other urban centers. While on one hand there are common qualities that often shape, define and determine city form and function, on the other hand the unique dimensions of place, including geography, history, context and culture, serve to make indelible differences. We will be examining and exploring Tokyo while critically considering analyses and understanding other cities (including selected examples from North America, Europe and elsewhere). Our studies of the city will be manifold, looking into broader systems & assemblies while digging deeper into more tightly demarcated and nuanced precincts, projects & parameters. Aspects that will be covered include urban evolution, urban culture, urban space, urban politics, urban planning, urban innovation and, crucially, urban place-making.

### Objectives

*"Nothing is harder, yet nothing is more necessary, than to speak of certain things whose existence is neither demonstrable nor probable. The very fact that serious and conscientious men treat them as existing things brings them a step closer to existence and to the possibility of being born."  
Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (1972)*

Urban Design Theory surveys a fundamental base through which to approach analysis and synthesis, from an Environmental Design perspective, in the city. Our understanding of the principles and practices of Urban Design afford us a potent lens through which we can approach both problem-seeking and problem-solving. In the instance of Tokyo, especially considering its complexity and density, it is essential that we operate with sound strategy as we plan, design, intervene, alter and insert. The objectives of the course include:

- ✦ Develop the means, methods and mindset to critically consider, compare and evaluate cities.
- ✦ Develop knowledge and skills concerning the planning, design and development of urban space and form.
- ✦ Develop understanding of the historical evolution of cities, their present circumstances and their emerging trends.
- ✦ Develop the ability to be able to research, assess, interpret and advance dimensions of urban design of cities.
- ✦ Develop more interdisciplinary, imaginative and team-based approaches to research, planning, design and communication.
- ✦ Develop world and self-views concerning urban design and its potential influence and impact upon planning, design, people and place.

### Requirements

The urban systems course carefully considers pedagogical aims for Environmental Design students. As such the deliverables for the course find balance between disciplinary means, methods, processes and products. Beyond required attendance and participation in all components of the course, there are three assignments (one group project and two individual components). Working in teams (same composition as studio teams) students will explore specific qualities/conditions/characteristics (to be confirmed by the instructor) of urban design using Tokyo as the living lab. The deliverables for this assignment will include both digital presentation and a written report.

The second assignment (individual) will compare and contrast selected urban qualities within Tokyo to parallel urban qualities in Western cities. Student interest will inform this research. The deliverable for this assignment will be a written report. A third assignment, a semester long journal, provides opportunities for informed observation, critical assessment, inspired connections and creative explorations. Finally attendance/participation is a final and vital component for evaluation. Specific objectives, details, requirements and deadlines will be given, at a later date, for each of these four course evaluative components.

## Grading

Grades will be cumulative through the semester. Students are expected to meet all requirements for each assignment to receive a passing grade. In general grades will be based on the following (depending on the topic and the assignment): development (process) 30%, conclusion (product) 30%, presentation 30%, graphic design 10%. Attendance and active participation in all components of the course account for 20% of the final grade.

## Grading Scale

Final grades will be reported as letter grades, with the final grade calculated according to the 4-point range.

Grade	Grade Point Value	4-Point Range	Percent	Description
A+	4.00	4.00	95-100	Outstanding - evaluated by instructor
A	4.00	3.85-4.00	90-94.99	Excellent - superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	3.50-3.84	85-89.99	Very good performance
B+	3.30	3.15-3.49	80-84.99	Good performance
B	3.00	2.85-3.14	75-79.99	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	2.50-2.84	70-74.99	Minimum pass for students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	2.15-2.49	65-69.99	All final grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	1.85-2.14	60-64.99	
C-	1.70	1.50-1.84	55-59.99	
D+	1.30	1.15-1.49	50-54.99	
D	1.00	0.50-1.14	45-49.99	
F	0.00	0-0.49	0-44.99	

### Notes:

Passing grades must be achieved on all assignments weighted over 30% of the total course assessment. A student who receives a "C+" or lower in any one course will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average (GPA) unless the program recommends otherwise. If the program permits the student to retake a failed course, the second grade will replace the initial grade in the calculation of the GPA, and both grades will appear on the transcript. Students are expected to complete all course assignments on time. There will be no final exam. Students must obtain an overall passing grade to pass this course, however, if a student fails any phase of the course worth 30% or more they will fail the course. A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, test, etc.) has been unfairly graded may request to have the paper re-graded. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor within fifteen days of being notified of the mark or of the item's return to the class. More information can be found in the Graduate Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-o.html>

## Schedule F.2018

### **Weeks 1 – 6 Urban Tokyo: Critically Considering Qualities, Conditions, Factors & Fabric**

Component 1: Group Assignment due October 05<sup>th</sup> | 35%

### **Weeks 6 – 12 Urban Content + Character: Comparing & Contrasting Tokyo with Western Precedents**

Component 2: Individual Assignment due November 16<sup>th</sup> | 35%

### **Weeks 1 - 12 Term Wide Aspects**

Component 3: Semester Journal | Digital | Individual Assignment due on November 23<sup>th</sup> | 20%

Component 4: Attendance and Active Participation in course | 10%

*Notes: The schedule is subject to change. All submission dates are tentative.*

### **Required Textbook:**

LeGates, Richard T. + Stout, Frederic (Editors). (2016) *The City Reader*. (6th Edition). Urban Reader Series. Routledge: London, UK.

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- Jonas, Marieluise and Rahmann, Heike. (2014). *Tokyo Void: Possibilities in Absence*. Jovis: Berlin, DE.
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#### Notes:

1. Written work, term assignments and other course related work may only be submitted by e-mail if prior permission to do so has been obtained from the course instructor. Submissions must come from an official University of Calgary (ucalgary) email account.
2. Academic Accommodations. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their Instructor or the designated contact person in EVDS, Jennifer Taillefer (jtaillef@ucalgary.ca). Students who require an accommodation unrelated to their coursework or the requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the Vice-Provost (Student Experience). For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/)
3. Plagiarism - Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:(a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),(b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,(c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,(d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course(although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved. While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. It is recognized that clause (d) does not prevent a graduate student incorporating work previously done by him or her in a thesis. Any suspicion of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean, and dealt with as per the regulations in the University of Calgary Graduate Calendar.
4. Appeals: If a student has a concern about the course, academic matter, or a grade that they have been assigned, they must first communicate this concern with the instructor. If the concern cannot be resolved with the instructor, the student can proceed with an academic appeal, which normally begins with the Faculty: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/appeals>
5. Information regarding the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>) and how this impacts the receipt and delivery of course material

6. Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>)
7. Safewalk information (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>)
8. Contact Info for: Student Union (<https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/contact/>); Graduate Student representative( <http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa/>) and Student Ombudsman's Office (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/>).

**Special Budgetary Requirements**

Special budgetary requirements are limited to the optional purchase of course readings and, in specific courses, mandatory supplementary fees to cover certain expenditures, such as field trips. Mandatory supplementary fees must be approved by the University prior to implementation.

**Optional:** For certain courses students may be given the option of purchasing course readings. In these cases the cost of the reading package should be stated in the course outline. When course readings are available for purchase, a minimum of two copies of the readings must be made available at the EVDS Reception.

**Mandatory:** The University has approved supplemental fees for the following courses:

**2017/2018 SUPPLEMENTARY COURSE FEES**

ARST 484/EVDA 580 - Studio I Design Thinking	\$150.00
ARST 444/EVDA 582 - Studio II in Architecture	\$150.00
EVDA 682.02 – Intermediate Studio	\$150.00
EVDA 682.04 - Comprehensive Arch. Studio	\$150.00
EVDA 782 - Senior Arch. Studio (all Calgary sections)	\$150.00
EVDL 667 – Landscape Architecture Studio I	\$150.00
EVDL 668 – Landscape Architecture Studio II	\$150.00
EVDL 777 – Senior Research Studio in Landscape Architecture	\$150.00
EVDS 620 – Urban Design Studio	\$150.00
EVDS 640 – Regional Planning Studio	\$90.00
EVDP 626 – Landscape Planning and Ecological Design	\$100.00
EVDP 644 – Advanced Professional Planning Studio	\$150.00

**Contact & Office Information**

Dr. Brian R. Sinclair | [brian.sinclair@ucalgary.ca](mailto:brian.sinclair@ucalgary.ca) Please contact instructor with questions/concerns. Meetings by appointment.

*“Our bodily experience of the city develops following various undulations. For example, if you were to walk down a bustling street, your attention would be concentrated on continuous, unmediated, fascinating spaces. Walking through Tokyo, the storefronts buried in gaudy accessories piled one on top of the other, left, right and center, we are completely surrounded by a thin veil of color and excitement. In a European city, you would not find the same extreme experience: there is no other place where the glittering veil covers space so completely that it becomes part of our attire. This experience envelops our bodies completely.”*

Toyo Ito, 2012 (Forces of Nature)



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